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By-Paisley, William J.

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INFORMATION SOURCE PREFERENCE AS A FUNCTION OF PHYSICAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL DISTANCE FROM THE INFORMATION OBJECT[1]

William J. Paisley

Institute for Communication Research

Stanford University

July, 1966

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Abstract

The sources a person prefers to use for information are probably predictable on the basis of personal attributes and environmental factors. To suggest the simplest examples: an illiterate person will not prefer print sources; a resident of a televisionless community will not prefer television ("prefer" in this usage does not mean "would use if he could" but rather "regularly favors in making use of").

In this study, data were collected on "major" and "most helpful" sources used by high school students (incoming Syracuse University freshmen at the time of data collection) as they gathered information about Syracuse and other colleges. Sources were both interpersonal (family, friends, high school personnel, college representatives) and impersonal (college catalogs, guides, and the mass media). Personal and environmental data were collected to form a set of potential predictors.

The strategy of analysis reversed the usual procedure for reducing survey data. Instead of proceeding from univariate to bivariate to higher-order tabulations, an overview of relationships was first obtained by means of factor analysis and multiple regression analysis, thus guiding selected tabulations.

Four variables emerged as predictors of information-source response: physical distance from the information object (operationally, the respondent's state of residence in relation to Syracuse University), psychological distance (operationally, whether any member of the immediate family had attended Syracuse), the number of friends and adult acquaintances who attend(ed) Syracuse, and sex. These variables chiefly predicted whether interpersonal or impersonal sources would be dominant; intermedia preferences were ambiguous because of the rarity with which media sources were cited. The study affirms the importance of interpersonal sources and suggests factors on which their use is partly contingent.

Information Source Preference
As a Function of Physical and Psychological Distance
From the Information Object[1]

Introduction

Information source preference is one of several behaviors and attitudes associated with information seeking. It has been studied extensively in populations of scientists, because of policy-makers' interest in improving the flow of scientific information (cf. Paisley, 1965), and to a lesser extent in the general population. The survey Research Center (1958) obtained general-population preferences among media sources of science news. Schramm (1962) reports sources to which respondents would turn for information on cancer, child-rearing, and mental health. There is a large, peripherally relevant literature on media preferences in which the intended use of the medium is left unspecified. In these studies it is not clear when the medium is preferred as a source of information and when it is preferred as entertainment, company, or "something to do".

Other studies, concerned with the relative credibility of sources of news, imply source preferences if we assume that the more believable source will be preferred -- not necessarily the case if the sources differ greatly in use costs or if other use rewards outweigh credibility.

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[1]This is an occasional paper of the CODE project, an investigation of communication-decision processes conducted by William P. Ehling of Syracuse University and Harold D. Holder of Baylor University. The author was affiliated with the project in 1961 and 1962. This paper reports a recent analysis of 1962 data.

Credibility studies (e.g. Westley and Severin, 1964; Carter and Greenberg, 1965) have thus far emphasized intramedia comparisons and news topics. It will be useful to repeat such research with less timebound topics and with "books" and "other people" among the suggested sources.

In still other studies, information source preferences, although not measured directly, may be inferred from sources actually used by respondents. Greenberg (1964) examined the balance between interpersonal and media sources in the diffusion of 18 news items and found that interpersonal sources were dominant when general awareness of the event was very high. Media sources were most cited in the middle ranges of awareness, and interpersonal sources became important again, if not dominant, at the lowest level of general awareness. Greenberg's introduction of the awareness continuum helped to reconcile findings from earlier studies such as Larsen and Hill (1954), Danielson (1956), and Deutschmann and Danielson (1960).

Studies of the diffusion of news provide weak data on information source <u>preference</u>, because we cannot distinguish between active seeking and passive receiving. It is clear from Greenberg's study of the diffusion of news about the Kennedy assassination (1964) that many respondents did not <u>endeavor</u> at first to learn of the event; the news so saturated every channel that they could not escape it.

In the present study, college freshmen report several aspects of their information-seeking behavior when, as high school students, they gathered facts about colleges. In most instances, this was a behavior of long duration (almost 60 per cent of the sample began thinking about

college before high school), and responses concerning major sources, most helpful single source, recall of information in the media, etc., may be assumed to represent a distillation of many experiences.

In some respects these students have more in common with scientists collecting information to advance their research than with members of the general population who are merely exposed to a news story. Information about colleges is open-ended; facts gleaned from various sources may be tested against other facts, and a source may come to be valued more or valued less for the long-term quality of its facts and for long-term costs of using it.

Distance from the Information Object

These data are somewhat unique in that the physical distance separating the information seeker from the information object may be specified. Distance cannot so be specified in most occupational information seeking, public-affairs information seeking, leisure-activity information seeking, etc. In this study the information object was Syracuse University, and distance from Syracuse to the respondent's state of residence can be computed (even if the physical distance scale is finally trichotomized into New York State, border states, and states beyond the border states, or distant states).

It is also possible in these data to specify a measure of psychological distance. Conceptually this variable is linked to Carter's "salience" (1965); both refer to the capacity of the object to loom large in a person's life-space as a function of previous encounters (direct or mediated). The significance of psychological distance in information seeking was suggested by Schramm (1949):

> ...proximity as a news value . . . is not to be interpreted as mere physical proximity. For example, a fight in an American city may be physically nearer than a battle in the South Pacific, but if a mother has a son in the battle then how much more easily can she identify herself with the distant battle than with the nearer fight!

Undoubtedly the best measure of psychological distance would take into account a person's history of encounters with the object. Such data could be collected only in a case study, and perhaps case studies should be attempted. In the present large-sample study, a simple measure of psychological distance was derived from the response that a member of the immediate family had or had not attended Syracuse. Allowing for deviation error, it may be inferred that respondents feel psychologically closer to Syracuse if one or more immediate family members have attended Syracuse than if none has attended. Of course there are other ways to achieve psychological closeness, and the "immediate" family member may be quite distant from the respondent in communication and affect. In other words, the assumed relationship between psychological distance and this response may fail both ways. Yet in the normative case this measure has face validity. "Someone [formerly] at Syracuse" is this study's analogue to Schramm's "someone in the South Pacific."

Data Collection

During Orientation Week in 1962, incoming Syracuse freshmen completed a questionnaire described correctly as "part of a larger study to provide

information about how young people make decisions to go to college" (the questionnaire was also administered at Syracuse in 1963, 1964, and 1965, and at Baylor University in 1965). All responses were structured. Data from the 1,967 questionnaires were transferred to cards for machine analysis.

Analysis

Strategy of analysis. A cluster of responses concerning major information sources, most helpful single source, and recall of information in the media are designated "information responses". The strategy of the analysis is to account for variance in these responses as a function of physical distance, psychological distance, personal attributes, and situational factors.

As is true of most questionnaire-based studies of this kind, the data are embarrassingly rich: far more information was obtained than can be interpreted in any primary analysis. In order to make the most of this richness, a multivariate analysis model was adopted at the outset. That is, instead of proceeding from univariate to bivariate to higher-order analyses, as we typically do in survey analysis, it was decided to compute all measures of association between variables as a first step. Besides providing an "all-at-once" view of patterns of variation in the data, this correlation matrix served as input to two multivariate procedures: (1) a factor analysis that identified clusters of variables combinable into indices, reducing the complexity of the analysis, (2) a series of multiple regressions, taking each information response successively as the criterion, that identified significant

predictors. Then bivariate and higher-order tables were generated for a closer inspection of patterns of association among significant predictors and the cluster of information responses.

A useful terminology of analysis strategies has been suggested by Selvin and Stuart (1966): "snooping" through the data to test all of a predesignated set of hypotheses, "fishing" through the data to nominate certain variables for inclusion in an explanatory model, and "hunting" through the data to determine what correlates with what. In those terms the present study mostly involves fishing. In replication, with a more recent collection of similar data, hypotheses derived from the fishing analysis could be snooped through.

Selection and dichotomization of variables. Counting the measures of distance, information responses, personal attributes, and situational factors, 35 variables were included in the analysis, as listed in Appendix I.

It was decided that the statistic phi/phi-max (i.e., the ratio of an obtained phi coefficient to the maximum phi coefficient possible for a given fourfold table) had fewer faults than alternative statistics. To prepare the data for phi/phi-max computation, it was necessary to dichotomize each non-dichotomous variable. Many variables in the set had ordered responses (e.g., the first four in Appendix I); these were dichotomized as close to the response median as possible. Variables with qualitatively different responses (e.g., number 30 in Appendix I) were dichotomized according to a distinction in the underlying construct that the variable was assumed to reflect, such as interpersonal vs.

impersonal information sources. Details of the dichotomization are presented in Appendix I.

Stratification by physical distance. With minor omissions, the initial data represented a census of Syracuse freshmen. As might be expected, the proportion of New York State residents greatly exceeded the proportion of border state residents, and little more than 10 per cent of the 1,967 respondents came from distant states. Many of the New York State and border state freshmen may be regarded as surplus cases in terms of a reasonably sensitive analysis, and these two subsamples were therefore reduced by random deletion to 400 cases each. All but a few of the distant state respondents were retained; these few were eliminated by random deletion to yield a sample of 200 cases. The fact that the obtained samples are disproportionate does not affect the analysis, since physical distance is retained as a stratifying variable throughout.

Appendix I reports percentages for each dichotomized variable within the three regions. Declining percentages from New York State to border states to distant states show that several variables are correlated with physical distance. Among them is variable 1, the operational definition of psychological distance.

Factor analysis. Table 1 briefly summarizes the variables for which three regional factor solutions were computed. Despite the low level of

[Table 1 about here]

correlation that dichotomies usually yield, each correlation matrix proved to be quite factorable. The factor solutions extracted 46, 46, and 51 per cent of the total variance in the three regions, respectively.

Table 2 represents patterns of variable clustering, indicated by loadings on the first ten factors after rotation to simple structure.

[Table 2 about here]

These clusters appeared with sufficient clarity in two or more regions to suggest that indices could be computed from them:

(1) A "richness of interpersonal information sources" cluster, combining variables 2, 3, and perhaps 4.

(2) A "parents attended college" cluster, combining variables 5 and 6.

(3) A "go/no-go certainty" cluster, combining variables 7, 8, 9, and 10.

(4) A "financial certainty" cluster, combining variables 11 and 22.

(5) A "which-college certainty" cluster, combining variables 16 and 17.

(6) A "family preference and attitude" cluster, combining variables 18, 19, 20, and 21.

Regression analysis. Before indices were computed, however, the predictability of each information response was assessed in a series of multiple linear regressions based on the individual dichotomized predictors. Because of machine limitations it was impossible to include the phi-max correction in these analyses; the generally low multiple correlations reported in Table 3 reflect the low uncorrected phi's that served as input (phi coefficients are artifactually depressed to the

[Table 3 about here]

extent that marginal percentages are disproportionate; the phi-max correction takes account of this).

Table 3 identifies variables that emerge as strong predictors of more than one information response or of the same information response in more than one region. For instance, variable 3 (adult acquaintances attended Syracuse) appears seven times. Variable 25 (sex) appears five times, chiefly predicting recall of information in media. The psychological distance variable, 1 (family member attended Syracuse), appears four times. Most variables from other clusters do not appear at all.

A qualification concerning the factor analysis and regression analysis. There is no prior evidence that any bivariate relationship in these analyses should be linear or even monotonic. A linear model may obscure significant relationships that happen to be curvilinear. In general, however, a significant curvilinear relationship will have a sizable linear component that draws attention to it in a linear analysis. Therefore it is not sufficient merely to skim the cream in these analyses, concentrating on the clearest clusters and the strongest predictors. It is necessary to inspect bivariate tabulations of information responses against original (undichotomized) variables down to about the fifth strongest predictor of each response, to check the linearity assumption. This was done, and no clearly curvilinear relationship was detected.

Relationships among information responses. The factor analysis (Table 2) did not show clustering among the major source responses (variables 26, 27, and 28), although there are diffuse, multi-factor clusters linking the major source responses and the single most helpful

source response. Table 4 elaborates these patterns and shows no pattern of co-response strong enough to justify reducing all information responses

[Table 4 about here]

to a single response-disposition, desirable though this might be in interpreting the set of responses.

Table 4 does show, not surprisingly, that a respondent is likely to name as the single most helpful source a source already mentioned by him as major. Otherwise percentages of joint response are close to chance levels.

Information response by physical and psychological distance. Table 5 is the most basic table of the substantive analysis for which the above analyses were preparatory. It shows clearly that both physical and psychological distance are systematically related to information source

[Table 5 about here]

preference and other information responses. Among the major trends:

(1) Psychological distance accounts for a far greater percentage difference among major source responses than does physical distance. Physical distance is systematically related only to the response that interviews and discussions with high school and college personnel were a major source of information, and then only among the psychologically close respondents to whom such interviews and discussions would be less important. In all three regions, psychological closeness is associated with more mention

of conversations and less mention of interviews, discussions, and impersonal sources.

(2) Physical distance is not related to the most helpful source response at all, whereas psychological distance bears the same relationship to the most helpful source response as it does to major source responses.

(3) Recall of information in the media is related to both measures of distance, although in no simple fashion. Recall is highest when the respondent is both physically and psychologically near. There is no evidence that the media are acting as substitutes for psychological closeness except in the most distant region.

(4) Irrespective of physical distance, a psychologically close respondent is most likely to name only interpersonal sources as major, while a psychologically distant respondent is likely to name <u>both</u> interpersonal and impersonal sources as major.[1]

<u>Information response by physical distance, psychological distance, and "richness of interpersonal information sources"</u>. The highest level of the "conversations" major source response was 66 per cent, among respondents who were both physically and psychologically near. When richness of the interpersonal information <u>resource</u> is controlled, as in Table 6, even higher percentages of "well-situated" respondents cite conversations as a major source and even lower percentages of "poorly situated" respondents cite it.

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[1] In replication these assertions should be supported by probability statistics. In this study the data have already been "fished" for promising variables; high significance levels of those variables may be misleading.

[Table 6 about here]

A "well-situated" respondent is one who is psychologically close and who knows both friends and adults (outside the family) who attended Syracuse. In this situation from 73 to 79 per cent cite conversations as a major source (physical distance makes almost no difference). A "poorly situated" respondent is psychologically distant and knows no friends or adults who attended Syracuse. Only from 27 to 32 per cent of these respondents cite conversations as a major source, and again physical distance does not appear to be a factor.

The same pattern holds in the most helpful source response, except that "poorly situated" respondents who are physically close do often cite conversations as most helpful, although they do so far less often than "well-situated" respondents who are also physically close. It may be that, given proximity to the information object, even people with no formal association with the information object will engage in conversations about it, and the "poorly situated" respondent finds these conversations helpful.

The effect of "richness of interpersonal information sources" on increasing the perceived value of conversations is even more apparent in Table 6 among those who are psychologically distant than among those who are psychologically close. It is clear that, when an interpersonal "pipeline" to the information object was open either inside or outside the family, respondents were quick to acknowledge its value.

Information response by physical distance, psychological distance, and respondent's sex. There is a popular impression that women are more voluble than men. We note that the Bureau of Applied Social Research

was careful to study personal influence among women, not men, in Decatur (Katz and Lazarsfeld, 1955). Shilling, Bernard, and Tyson (1964) report that women scientists rely more on conversations for information than do men scientists of the same age (age is a confounding variable). These considerations justify an analysis that takes into account the respondent's sex, as presented in Table 7.

[Table 7 about here]

The pattern is unexpected and interesting. While female respondents are generally more likely than male respondents to cite conversations as a major source, somewhat the reverse is true of interviews and discussions, which also involve talking. Psychological distance but not physical distance affects these percentage differences in the usual way: always more conversations among the psychologically close; always more interviews and discussions among the psychologically distant, irrespective of sex. Citation of impersonal sources as major is affected as usual by psychological distance but not by sex. Similar trends hold for the most helpful source response.

The intrafamilial/extrafamilial sex difference in talking about college is difficult to interpret. Two potential artifacts may be dismissed: there is no significant correlation between sex and "family attended Syracuse" or between sex and "friends and adults attended Syracuse". It may be, given persisting role differences in our society, that male respondents desired expert extrafamilial advice on college in relation to career plans while female respondents were satisfied with intrafamilial advice related to their own, more varied, purposes in attending college.

Information response and other factors. Taken singly or in clusters, other predictors prove not to be as systematically related to information response as the four introduced above. The three uncertainty indices, for instance, do not predict either the number of sources cited as major or the specific sources cited as major and most helpful. The fact that one or both parents did or did not attend college is uncorrelated with information response, except when Syracuse happens to be the college attended (therefore the psychological distance measure is not merely a locator of college homes). The "family preference and attitude" cluster is uncorrelated with information response.

The minor trends that do appear are interpretable, at least post hoc. Two examples will suffice:

(1) In five of the six combinations of physical and psychological distance, respondents with consistent family preferences (variable 35) were more likely than other respondents to report interviews and discussions with college and high school personnel as a major source. This finding invites the post hoc interpretation that the "consistent" respondent sought outside the family for discussion of alternatives to Syracuse. The exceptional case is that of psychological closeness and greatest physical distance, the case in which there was at least one intrafamilial "Syracuse expert" and fewer extrafamilial sources who could compare Syracuse with other colleges.

(2) In five of the six combinations of physical and psychological distance, respondents for whom college was "absolutely

essential" were more likely than other respondents to cite conversations as the most helpful source of information. This finding suggests that, when college is perceived as "absolutely essential", there is more likely to be family involvement in the communication-decision process. When college attendance is perceived as a more minor issue, then the relative lack of family involvement may send the respondent in search of impersonal and extrafamilial interpersonal sources, one of which he later regards as most helpful. The exception to this finding occurs when the respondent is physically close (hence many extrafamilial sources available) and psychologically distant (hence no "Syracuse expert" in the family).

Discussion. This study isolated four factors that seem to predict source preferences: physical distance, psychological distance, sex, and "richness of the interpersonal information resource". Two factors, physical distance and sex, are conceptually distinct, but the measures of psychological distance and "interpersonal information resource richness" are so similar that they should probably be considered instances of the same construct. That is, the fact that a friend or adult acquaintance has attended Syracuse may be expected to decrease psychological distance in the same way, if not to the same extent, as the fact that a family member has attended.

One of the shortcomings of this study is its confounding of psychological distance and the availability of information from interpersonal

sources. If a respondent is psychologically close, then he is very likely to have an "expert" interpersonal source at hand. Having such a source, he may be less inclined to consult other sources. It might be more reasonable to attribute his preference for conversations to the availability of the source, not to psychological distance.

In natural situations psychological distance and interpersonal source availability are highly correlated. In Schramm's (1949) example, the mother probably has heard at least some news from her son in the South Pacific. Unless her questions are urgent, she can address them to him in a letter.

Psychological distance will have an ambiguous status as a predictor of information source preference until a design is worked out that will allow it and interpersonal information source availability to vary independently.

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APPENDIX I

Variables Used in the Analysis

Analysis Number: 1
Questionnaire Number: 19

Question: Of those who attended college, how many members of your immediate family attended Syracuse?

Use in analysis: considered to reflect psychological distance of the information object from the information seeker; also indicates whether expert interpersonal information sources are present in family.

Dichotomized between 0 and 1 or more members, + assigned to the latter.

+%: New York, 42.5 Border States, 27.0 Distant States, 25.5

Analysis Number: 2
Questionnaire Number: 20

Question: Of those who attended college (or are now in attendance), how many friends of your own age (from high school and your home town) attended Syracuse or are now in attendance here?

Use in analysis: psychological distance, availability of interpersonal information sources.

Dichotomized between "one or two" and "a few" or more friends, + assigned to the latter.

+%: New York, 73.8 Border States, 42.2 Distant States, 38.0

Analysis Number: 3
Questionnaire Number: 21

Question: Of those who attended college, how many of your adult acquaintances (high school teachers and advisors, business friends, neighbors, etc.) attended Syracuse?

Use in analysis: psychological distance, availability of interpersonal information sources.

Dichotomized between "one or two" and "a few" or more adult acquaintances, + assigned to the latter.

+%: New York, 50.5 Border States, 29.5 Distant States, 25.0

APPENDIX I/2

Analysis Number: 4
Questionnaire Number: 7

Question: What proportion of your graduating class would you say is going on to college?

Use in analysis: an aspect of the "taken-for-grantedness" of college plans.

Dichotomized at 75 per cent of graduating class, + assigned to >75.

+%: New York, 40.0 Border States, 36.8 Distant States, 54.0

Analysis Number: 5
Questionnaire Number: 12

Question: Which of the following is true of your father? [he did not attend college/he attended Syracuse University ... / etc.]

Use in analysis: another aspect of the "taken-for-grantedness" of college plans.

Dichotomized between some college attendance and no college attendance by father, + assigned to the former.

+%: New York, 58.8 Border States, 68.2 Distant States, 70.0

Analysis Number: 6
Questionnaire Number: 13

Question: Which of the following is true of your mother? [she did not attend college/she attended Syracuse University ... /etc.]

Use in analysis: same as 5.

Dichotomized between some college attendance and no college attendance by mother, + assigned to the former.

+%: New York, 45.8 Border States, 46.2 Distant States, 50.5

Analysis Number: 7
Questionnaire Number: 14

Question: As you remember, when did you start thinking about going to college? [before high school/during freshman or sophomore years/etc.]

Use in analysis: reflects period of time during which information may have been sought deliberately; also another aspect of "taken-for-grantedness" in recent time.

Dichotomized between "before high school" and later periods, + assigned to former.

+%: New York, 56.5 Border States, 59.2 Distant States, 62.5

APPENDIX I/3

Analysis Number: 8
Questionnaire Number: 15

Question: Which of the following best summarizes your feelings about college when you were in high school? [I always wanted to attend college; I had no doubts about it/ I wanted to attend college, but I wasn't sure my grades would be high enough/etc.]

Use in analysis: elements of uncertainty about continuing on to college.

Dichotomized between "no doubts" and all other responses, + assigned to the former.

+%: New York, 75.8 Border States, 77.2 Distant States, 83.0

Analysis Number: 9
Questionnaire Number: 10

Question: What was your academic average in high school?

Use in analysis: another aspect of uncertainty about continuing on to college.

Dichotomized between "high B" (and above) and "low B" (and below), + assigned to the former.

+%: New York, 54.0 Border States, 48.8 Distant States, 54.0

Analysis Number: 10
Questionnaire Number: 11

Question: On the strength of your high school grades <u>alone</u>, would you say that: [you could gain admission to <u>any</u> college of your choosing/you could gain admission to some "tough" colleges, but not necessarily all/etc.]

Use in analysis: subjectively perceived certainty of admission to broad or narrow range of colleges about which information might be sought.

Dichotomized between "tough" colleges (and above) and "colleges with moderately high admissions standards" (and below), + assigned to the former.

+%: New York, 34.0 Border States, 35.8 Distant States, 37.5

Analysis Number: 11
Questionnaire Number: 41

Question: Which of these statements best describes the financial circumstances of your family? [they cannot afford to contribute at all to your college fees/ etc.]

11 (Cont.)

Use in analysis: aspect of uncertainty about continuing on to college.

Dichotomized below capacity of support at any "average" college, + assigned to higher.

+%: New York, 55.8 Border States, 67.5 Distant States, 69.5

Analysis Number: 12
Questionnaire Number: 17

Question: Which of these statements best describes the value of college education in <u>your</u> plans? [college training is absolutely essential in the field for which I am preparing/ ... /college training is entirely irrelevant to the field for which I am preparing]

Use in analysis: importance of the decision for which information is being gathered.

Dichotomized between "absolutely essential" and "very desirable" (and below), + assigned to the former.

+%: New York, 68.0 Border States, 65.0 Distant States, 63.5

Analysis Number: 13
Questionnaire Number: 33

Question: Please consider this statement: "In general, the cost of a college education today exceeds the benefit derives." Do you... [decidedly agree/ tend to agree/tend to disagree/decidedly disagree/not sure, undecided]

Use in analysis: importance of the decision.

Dichotomized with "decidedly disagree" against all other responses, + assigned to "decidedly disagree".

+%: New York, 48.5 Border States, 40.8 Distant States, 48.5

Analysis Number: 14
Questionnaire Number: 34

Question: Please consider this statement: "A college education is almost essential if one is to live life at its best." Do you... [same response categories as 13]

14 (cont.)

Use in analysis: importance of the decision.

Dichotomized with "decidedly agree" against all other responses, + assigned to "decidedly agree".

+%: New York, 41.5 Border States, 35.5 Distant States, 50.5

Analysis Number: 15
Questionnaire Number: 35

Question: Please consider this statement: "A college education may be a good thing, but when it comes to getting ahead in the world, it is not what you know but whom you know." Do you... [same response categories as 13]

Use in analysis: importance of the decision.

Dichotomized with "tend to disagree" and "decidedly disagree" against all other responses, + assigned to the former categories.

+%: New York, 69.0 Border States, 66.2 Distant States, 71.0

Analysis Number: 16
Questionnaire Number: 23

Question: To how many colleges did you apply?

Use in analysis: uncertainty in the which-college decision.

Dichotomized between 3 or fewer and 4 or more, + assigned to the latter.

+%: New York, 36.0 Border States, 54.5 Distant States, 49.0

Analysis Number: 17
Questionnaire Number: 24

Question: How many colleges accepted your application?

Use in analysis: uncertainty in the which-college decision.

Dichotomized between 1 or 2 and 3 or more, + assigned to the latter.

+%: New York, 36.2 Border States, 48.0 Distant States, 46.5

APPENDIX I/6

Analysis Number: 18
Questionnaire Number: 25

Question: Would you say that Syracuse was your <u>father's</u> first choice for you, second choice, third choice...

Use in analysis: uncertainty in the which-college decision.

Dichotomized between first choice and lower choices, + assigned to former.

+%: New York, 33.5 Border States, 34.8 Distant States, 35.0

Analysis Number: 19
Questionnaire Number: 26

Question: Would you say that Syracuse was your <u>mother's</u> first choice for you, second choice, third choice...

Use in analysis: uncertainty in the which-college decision.

Dichotomized between first choice and lower choices, + assigned to former.

+%: New York, 36.2 Border States, 34.2 Distant States, 37.0

Analysis Number: 20
Questionnaire Number: 22

Question: Was Syracuse University your: [first choice/second choice/etc.]

Use in analysis: uncertainty in the which-college decision, desirability.

Dichotomized between first choice and lower choices, + assigned to former.

+%: New York, 54.2 Border States, 56.8 Distant States, 55.5

Analysis Number: 21
Questionnaire Number: 32

Question: Please consider this statement: "Syracuse University can provide me with as good an education as any other college I thought about or applied to." Do you... [decidedly agree/tend to agree/tend to disagree/decidedly disagree/ not sure, undecided]

Use in analysis: attractiveness of the information object.

Dichotomized between "decidedly agree" and all other responses, + assigned to "decidedly agree".

+%: New York, 51.8 Border States, 56.8 Distant States, 52.0

Analysis Number: 22
Questionnaire Number: 42

Question: Which of the following levels would most likely include your parents' combined annual income, before taxes?

Use in analysis: family SES.

Dichotomized at $12,000; + assigned to higher income.

+%: New York, 44.0 Border States, 53.8 Distant States, 61.5

Analysis Number: 23
Questionnaire Number: 44

Question: Which of the following categories best describes your father's occupation?

Use in analysis: family SES.

Dichotomized between "professional-technical" and all others, + assigned to "professional-technical".

+%: New York, 34.3 Border States, 43.0 Distant States, 45.0

Analysis Number: 24
Questionnaire Number: 1

Question: Which of the following categories includes your age, as of today?

Use in analysis: personal attribute.

Dichotomized between 17 or younger and 18 or older, + assigned to older.

+%: New York, 57.2 Border States, 66.0 Distant States, 65.5

Analysis Number: 25
Questionnaire Number: 2

Question: Which of the following describes you? [single male/married male/ single female/married female]

Use in analysis: personal attribute.

Dichotomized between males and females, + assigned to the latter.

+%: New York, 45.8 Border States, 58.0 Distant States, 56.5

APPENDIX I/8

Analysis Numbers: 26,27,28
Questionnaire Number: 27

Question: Which of the following were among your major sources of information about Syracuse? (Pick as many as needed)

Use in analysis: one of the information-source preferences to be interpreted.

26+ = "conversations with friends and relatives"
26+%: New York, 53.0 Border States, 48.0 Distant States, 46.0

27+ = "interviews, discussions with high school personnel, college representatives"
27+%: New York, 46.5 Border States, 43.0 Distant States, 42.5

28+ = "college information guides, bulletins; radio, television, etc."
28+%: New York, 60.0 Border States, 64.2 Distant States, 64.5

Analysis Number: 29
Questionnaire Number: 28

Question: In your opinion, which one of the following was most helpful to you in picking Syracuse? [same response categories as paraphrased in 26,27,28]

Use in analysis: information-source preference to be interpreted.

Dichotomized between all interpersonal sources ("conversations, interviews, discussions") and all impersonal sources ("college information guides, radio, television, newspapers, magazines, etc."), + assigned to the latter.

+%: New York, 32.5 Border States, 37.5 Distant States, 31.5

Analysis Number: 30
Questionnaire Numbers: 29,31

Questions: Which one of the following media proved best in providing you with helpful information about the colleges and universities in which you were interested? Which of the following media proved best in providing you with helpful information about Syracuse University?

Use in analysis: information-source preference to be interpreted.

Dichotomized between any mention of newspapers, radio, television, or magazines in response to either question and mention only of books, information guides, etc., + assigned to any mention of the mass media.

+%: New York, 9.0 Border States, 8.0 Distant States, 9.5

Analysis Number: 31, 32, 33, 34
Questionnaire Number: 30

Question: Do you recall reading, hearing, or seeing anything about Syracuse University in any of the following? (Check more than one if needed.)

Use in analysis: recall of information available in impersonal sources.

31+ = newspapers
31+%: New York, 50.2 Border States, 60.0 Distant States, 51.5

32+ - radio
32+%: New York, 40.0 Border States, 32.2 Distant States, 31.5

33+ = television
33+%: New York, 47.2 Border States, 41.0 Distant States, 36.5

34+ = magazines
34+%: New York, 41.5 Border States, 42.2 Distant States, 40.0

Analysis Number: 35
Questionnaire Numbers: 22,25.26

Questions: Syracuse University was student's, father's, mother's first choice, second choice, etc. (see 18,19,20 above).

Use in analysis: index of choice consistency within the family.

Dichotomized between complete consistency and any inconsistency, + assigned to former.

+%: New York, 33.5 Border States, 29.0 Distant States, 32.5

Table 1. Brief Description of Variables Used in Analysis (Question Texts, Paraphrased Response Categories, Discussion of Analytic Use, and Marginal Percentages in Appendix I).

#	Positive Score in Dichotomized Version Indicates:
1	One or more members of immediate family attended Syracuse
2	At least "a few" home-town friends of own age attend(ed) Syracuse
3	At least "a few" home-town adult acquaintances attended Syracuse
4	75% or more of high-school class is going on to college
5	Father attended college (with or without taking degree)
6	Mother attended college (with or without taking degree)
7	Respondent began thinking about college attendance before high school
8	Respondent "always wanted to attend college, had no doubts about it"
9	High school academic average "high B" or above
10	On the basis of grades alone, respondent feels he could gain admission to "tough" colleges
11	Respondent believes family is able to support him at least at any "average" college
12	Respondent believes college "absolutely essential" in his plans
13	Respondent decidedly disagrees that college cost exceeds benefit
14	Respondent believes college is "almost essential if one is to live life at its best"
15	Respondent does not agree that "whom you know" is more important than "what you know" in "getting ahead in the world"
16	Applied to 4 or more colleges
17	Accepted by 3 or more colleges
18	Syracuse was father's first choice for respondent
19	Syracuse was mother's first choice for respondent
20	Syracuse was respondent's first choice
21	Respondent decidedly agrees that "Syracuse University can provide me with as good an education as any other college I thought about"

(Continued)

Table 1 (Continued).

#	Positive Score in Dichotomized Version Indicates:
22	Family income $12,000 or higher
23	Father's occupation is professional or technical
24	Respondent is 18 or older
25	Respondent is female
26	Respondent believes that "conversations with friends and relatives" were a major source of information about Syracuse
27	Respondent believes that "interviews, discussions with high school personnel and college representatives" were major source of information
28	Respondent believes that "college information guides, bulletins; radio, television, etc." were major source of information
29	Respondent names an impersonal (vs. interpersonal) source as most helpful to him in picking Syracuse
30	Respondent names any mass medium (vs. books and college catalogs) as best in providing him with helpful information either about Syracuse or about the colleges and universities in which he was interested
31	Respondent recalls seeing information about Syracuse in newspaper
32	Respondent recalls hearing information about Syracuse on radio
33	Respondent recalls seeing (hearing) information about Syracuse on television
34	Respondent recalls seeing information about Syracuse in magazine
35	Derived variable: complete agreement among respondent, father, and mother regarding Syracuse as first choice, second choice, etc.

Table 2. Factor Analyses of the First 30 Variables Summarized in Table 1. Separate Solutions Computed for Subsamples from New York State, Border States, and Distant States. Principal Axis Solutions, Rotated to Varimax Criterion.*

Var.	New York Factors										Border State Factors										Distant State Factors									
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	0
1	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	4	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	2	2	-	4	-
2	-	-	-	-	-	-	6	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	4	-	-	-	-	4	-	-	-	2	-	-	
3	-	-	-	2	2	-	4	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	2	-	-	-	-	5	-	-	-	-	-	2
4	-	-	-	-	-	-	5	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	3	2	-	-	2	-	2	-	-	-	5	-
5	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	6	-	-	-	-	-	-	7	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	7	-	-	-	-	-
6	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	6	-	-	-	-	-	3	4	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	8	-	-	-	-	-
7	-	-	-	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	5	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	5
8	-	-	-	3	-	-	-	-	5	-	2	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	4	2	-	3	-	2	-	-	-	-	3
9	-	-	-	7	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	7	-	-	-	3	-	-	-	2	-	-	7	-	-	-	-	-	-	2
10	-	-	-	7	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	7	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	6	-	-	-	-	2	-	-
11	6	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	7	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	7	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	2	-
12	-	-	-	-	-	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	2	-	-	-	2	2	2	-	-
13	-	-	-	-	-	5	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	-	-
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15	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	3	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	2	-
16	-	-	-	-	6	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	6	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	6	-	-	-	-
17	-	-	-	-	6	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	6	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	5	-	-	-	-
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22	6	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	7	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	8	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
23	3	-	-	-	-	2	-	5	-	-	-	-	-	-	7	-	-	-	-	-	4	-	-	2	3	-	-	-	-	-
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26	-	-	4	-	-	-	2	-	-	2	-	-	-	3	-	-	-	2	4	2	-	-	-	4	-	-	-	-	-	-
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29	-	-	7	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	6	-	-	-	-	-	3	2	2	2	2	-	-
30	3	2	2	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	3	-	6	-	-	2	-	2	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	6	2

*Input correlations are phi/phi-max computed from dichotomized data. Loadings are abbreviated to tenths without decimals: 2 equals a loading in the range from .20 to .29. Signs ignored. Loadings <.20 omitted.

Table 3. Predictability of Information Responses, Expressed as Multiple Correlation of Each Response with 26 Predictors (#s 1-25, 35), and Strongest Zero-Order Predictors.

Information Response	NEW YORK		BORDER STATES		DISTANT STATES	
	R	Strongest Zero-Order Predictor	R	Strongest Zero-Order Predictor	R	Strongest Zero-Order Predictor
Conversations with friends, relatives, were major sources of information about S.U.	.42	1: Family member attended S.U.	.43	3: Adult acquaintances attended S.U.	.40	1: Family member attended S.U.
Interviews, discussions with high school, college personnel were major sources	.29	1: Family member attended S.U.*	.27	10: On grades alone, R sure of admission	.41	5: Father attended college*
College information guides, bulletins, mass media, etc. were major sources	.25	1: Family member attended S.U.*	.35	9: High school academic average	.39	3: Adult acquaintances attended S.U.*
Choice of impersonal, not interpersonal, source as most helpful in learning about S.U.	.30	4: Proportion of high school class going to college*	.30	9: High school academic average	.37	18: S.U. was father's first choice for R*
Among impersonal sources, R names any mass medium, vs. guides and bulletins, as best	.30	5: Father attended college*	.27	25: Sex (males more likely to name mass medium)	.45	25: Sex (males more likely to name mass medium)
Information recalled in newspaper	.34	3: Adult acquaintances attended S.U.	.26	3: Adult acquaintances attended S.U.	.42	2: Home-town friends attend(ed) S.U.
Information recalled on radio	.36	3: Adult acquaintances attended S.U.	.31	4: Proportion of high school class going to college*	.36	2: Home-town friends attend(ed) S.U.
Information recalled on television	.37	3: Adult acquaintances attended S.U.	.28	25: Sex (males more likely to recall)	.38	12: R believes college essential in plans
Information recalled in magazine	.32	3: Adult acquaintances attended S.U.	.31	25: Sex (males more likely to recall)	.34	25: Sex (males more likely to recall)

*Negative correlation

Table 4. Relationships among Major Source Responses and Most Helpful Source Responses, by Physical Distance*.

	MAJOR						
	Conversations with friends, relatives		Interviews, discussions		College information guides, media, etc.		Total
MAJOR	Observed	Expected	Observed	Expected	Observed	Expected	Per Cent
Conversations with friends, relatives			28	25	32	32	55.0
			25	21	26	31	48.0
			22	20	28	30	46.0
Interviews, discussions with h.s., college personnel					39	28	46.5
					34	28	43.0
					32	27	42.5
College information guides, media, etc.							60.0
							64.2
							64.5
MOST HELPFUL							
Conversations with friends, relatives	29	18	11	16	18	21	34.8
	22	13	8	12	10	18	27.3
	24	13	10	12	14	18	28.5
Interviews, discussions with h.s., college personnel	13	17	29	15	16	18	31.8
	12	16	28	14	21	21	33.3
	10	16	29	15	22	22	34.5
College information guides, media, etc.	11	17	14	15	31	20	32.5
	14	18	12	16	34	24	37.5
	9	14	8	13	29	20	31.5

*Percentages in each cell are joint responses within New York, Border States, and Distant States, respectively. Expected percentages (joint probability) are computed from marginal percentages of each response pair. There was only one "most helpful" response per respondent, hence no joint responses within that set.

Read as follows (upper middle cell): 28 per cent of the New York State respondents, 25 per cent of the border state respondents, and 22 per cent of the distant state respondents cited both conversations and interviews/discussions as major information sources. The corresponding chance percentages were 25, 21, and 20, respectively.

Table 5. Information Responses by Physical and Psychological Distance*.

Physical Distance:	NEW YORK		BORDER STATES		DISTANT STATES	
Psychological Distance:	Near	Far	Near	Far	Near	Far
Per Cent Citing Source as Major:						
Conversations with friends, relatives	66	43	59	44	59	42
Interviews, discussions with h.s., college	41	51	38	45	29	47
College information guides, media, etc.	52	66	53	68	57	67
Per Cent Citing Source as Most Helpful:						
Conversations with friends, relatives	51	23	31	26	43	23
Interviews, discussions with h.s., college	21	40	34	34	24	39
College information guides, media, etc.	28	35	32	40	24	34
Per Cent Recalling Information in (on):						
Newspaper	55	57	59	60	51	52
Radio	45	36	39	30	31	32
Television	54	43	36	43	33	38
Magazine	44	40	44	42	37	41
Interpersonal/Impersonal Major Source Index**:						
Interpersonal only	48	34	47	32	43	32
Impersonal only	16	28	26	32	25	30
Both	36	37	27	37	31	38
Number of Cases:	170	230	100	292	51	149

*Psychological distance is operationally defined as variable 1, whether any member of the immediate family attended Syracuse.

**Multiple responses were permitted in the major source question. Index distinguishes among respondents who mentioned only interpersonal sources, only impersonal sources, or both.

Table 6. Conversations as Major and Most Helpful Source and Interpersonal/Impersonal Major Source Index by Physical and Psychological Distance and by Index of Friends and Adult Acquaintances Attending Syracuse*.

Physical Distance:		NEW YORK		BORDER STATES		DISTANT STATES	
Psychological Distance:		Near	Far	Near	Far	Near	Far
Per Cent Responding:							
Conversations with friends, relatives were major source							
F-A Index:	0	30	27	50	27	55	32
	1	59	44	60	57	56	56
	2	73	52	79	60	73	47
Conversations with friends, relatives were most helpful							
F-A Index:	0	35	39	30	14	32	16
	1	44	19	33	32	50	35
	2	58	25	32	44	55	26
Interpersonal/Impersonal Major Source Index:							
Interpersonal only							
F-A Index:	0	25	35	43	21	41	22
	1	43	35	51	37	33	46
	2	54	32	47	49	64	42
Impersonal only							
F-A Index:	0	30	33	34	44	32	37
	1	20	32	22	25	28	23
	2	11	21	16	11	9	16
Both							
F-A Index:	0	35	33	23	35	27	40
	1	38	33	27	38	39	31
	2	35	47	37	40	27	42
Number of Cases:							
F-A Index:	0	20	49	44	133	22	82
	1	61	104	45	114	18	48
	2	89	77	19	45	11	19

*The interpersonal/impersonal major source index distinguishes among respondents who mentioned only one or more interpersonal sources, one or more impersonal sources, or both.

Psychological distance is operationally defined as variable 1, whether any member of the immediate family attended Syracuse.

The friends-adults index equals 0 if neither friends nor adult acquaintances attended Syracuse, 1 if either attended, 2 if both attended.

Table 7. Major and Most Helpful Information Sources and Interpersonal/Impersonal Major Source Index by Physical and Psychological Distance and by Sex*.

Physical Distance:		NEW YORK		BORDER STATES		DISTANT STATES	
Psychological Distance:		Near	Far	Near	Far	Near	Far
Per Cent Citing Source as Major:							
Conversations with friends, relatives	M	60	35	51	31	48	45
	F	74	52	66	53	69	39
Interviews, discussions	M	39	52	38	45	36	55
	F	42	50	38	45	23	41
Information guides, media, etc.	M	51	56	51	69	60	63
	F	54	56	54	58	54	70
Per Cent Citing Source as Most Helpful:							
Conversations with friends, relatives	M	46	18	34	18	36	21
	F	56	29	20	31	50	25
Interviews, discussions	M	25	43	30	40	40	42
	F	17	35	36	29	8	36
Information guides, media, etc.	M	29	37	30	40	16	31
	F	27	33	32	39	31	37
Interpersonal/Impersonal Major Source Index:							
Interpersonal only	M	49	34	49	31	40	37
	F	46	34	46	32	46	29
Impersonal only	M	21	34	32	40	32	24
	F	12	21	21	26	19	33
Both	M	30	31	19	29	28	39
	F	42	45	33	43	35	37
Number of Cases:							
	M	92	125	47	121	25	62
	F	78	105	61	171	26	87

*The interpersonal/impersonal major source index distinguishes among respondents who mentioned only one or more interpersonal sources, one or more impersonal sources, or both.

Psychological distance is operationally defined as variable 1, whether any member of the immediate family attended Syracuse.